

REPRODUCED FROM THE
HOLDINGS OF THE
TEXAS STATE ARCHIVES

April 2, 1925

Secretary of State,
Austin, Texas.

The Legislature having adjourned I beg to hand you herewith House Bill No. 303, the same being an act to sell the Prison farms and remove the business of said system to another location, which bill I have this day disapproved and vetoed.

In taking this action I think it proper to state my reasons for doing so. There is much to be said ~~about~~ ^{about} continuing the present system in its present locality and there is likewise much to be said on the other side ~~and~~ in calling for a removal of the plant and business of the prison system to a centralized location.

I am in favor of selling some of the isolated farms of the system. I am not opposed to moving the system to some place where the prison business may be conducted in one large unit where at least half of the prison population may be continued in farming operations and the other half employed in manufacturing enterprises; but to do this it must be understood that it will involve ultimately an expenditure of at least \$10,000,000.00. At the least calculation it would take 20,000 acres of land which would cost at least \$3,000,000.00, and I think the new location should consist of not less than 40,000 acres which would cost at least 6,000,000.00. If after said site is acquired the demand of modern thought were met in the way of sanitation necessary for the proper health of the prison population, and if modern buildings and other equipment necessary were purchased, another expenditure of four and one half million dollars additional would be required. Incident to this would be the interest on this large sum pending construction, which would easily take another million dollars.

But this bill presents another question and confronts the Prison Commission and the Locating Board created by this act with problems which perhaps were not in mind at the time of the passage of this act. If the Locating Committee were to do this work well, the first thing it would be required to do would be to buy at least 10,000 acres of land, and if it was land worth cultivating in the territory provided for by the bill, it would take no less than \$1,000,000.00. To pay for this the Legislature has only provided \$100,000.00, the other \$900,000.00 being appropriated for a building to be erected on said site. No one sells land in this country for as little down as one tenth, and therefore the Locating Committee would be pushed to the necessity of immediately offering some of the prison farms for sale and if they sold them then they would immediately have to deliver possession without having any place provided to take the convicts now employed on any of the farms sold.

The Legislature in its wisdom decided not to give the Penitentiary system but \$100,000.00 for its maintenance. By the first of May the system will be again broke and be more than \$100,000.00 in debt for supplies already purchased during this year, and if the crops should not materialize then right in the midst of the removal operations the prison commission would be broke with more than three thousand hungry prisoners on its hands. I submit that it would not be the part of business prudence to attempt the removal of the penitentiary system under these conditions. Nothing would hamper or discredit the idea of having a centralized prison system more than failure in the first attempt to remove it.

I am not unmindful of the great patriotic impulses which

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have prompted the various women's organizations of the state and many other good people who are prompted by noble principles of humanity in bringing about reform in our prison system. There is much in the argument which they discuss in favor of removal. There have been recent abuses in the prison system which can not be justified and are justly condemned, and I shall do my best to meet the views of those who are calling for reform along these lines. When the condition of state finances will permit I am ready to co-operate with the Legislature in taking up the matter of prison removal in a practical and business way so that Texas may have a prison system second to none in the United States, but the present bill does not afford that opportunity, and believing that it will hamper and hinder rather than help the real purpose intended, I am compelled to veto and disapprove the same, and it is accordingly so done on this the day above written.

Respectfully,

Miriam A. Ferguson
Governor of Texas